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ABSTRACT

Comparative education research and courses are needed to identify real revolutionary movements in the current cultural revolution in the United States. The presence of cultural revolution is indicated by, among other things, the development of microcultures. Intranational instead of cross-national studies are of importance in the next few years to understand this cultural revolution. There are several problems with implementing this new focus, but a broad knowledge of the components of American culture are needed, as well as a preparation in the study of the processes used in understanding cultural revolution. Multicultural education would teach the desirability of cultural pluralism, and would purport to bring about interaction among groups in the nation. The discipline of comparative education is suited to the study of this interaction: the tools of scientific investigation; the methodology of area studies; the analysis and interpretation of cultural patterns within the framework of a whole culture. Students could be sensitized to cultural change, and develop renewed interest and sharpened awareness of the nature of cultural revolution as participants in the process. (Author/KSM)

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THE NEED FOR COMPARATIVE EDUCATION RESEARCH TO CONCENTRATE ON THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

If revolution can be defined as complete or drastic change of any kind then certainly we can point to many movements in our culture and label them revolution. Of what duration, of what importance to our society, what do they imply for the future, are all questions which affect not only labeling of certain changes as revolutions, but also the manner in which comparative education research and courses deal with the phenomena. Evolutionary changes are generally characterized by gradual development over centuries, perhaps, whereas the phenomena I refer to as revolutionary have taken place within the past ten to fifty years. I believe that our comparative education research and courses should concentrate in the coming years on the cultural revolution in the United States in an effort to identify real revolutionary movements from passing fads, and to work for cultural pluralism as a permanent objective in the United States. We should rather give priority to our efforts at home as a necessary first step to understanding education in foreign countries.

We have experienced in the United States many phenomena which might be labeled "cultural revolution". Because the process of identifying real cultural revolution is so complex we shall be content to mention only a few of the signs which seem to indicate its presence. Over the past ten years the wave of personalism as contrasted to institutionalism has given rise to changes in elementary and secondary education such as free schools, individually-guided-education programs, community as educator, and the non-graded schools. These programs are drastic changes from the schools of fifty years ago when the children and young people were seated in desks ~~either~~ whether attached to the floor or to a set of runners, where pupils were expected to be seen and not heard, where being out of their seats constituted an infraction of the rules by students, where the authoritarian position of the teacher made him the sole dispenser of knowledge, and where the community was considered "off limits" during school hours. On the level of higher education we note today greater flexibility in degree programs, personalized cluster colleges, Universities Without Walls, and independent study programs. Contrast these practices with the rigid and unalterable requirements for degrees, a limited program of electives when working for a degree, the completely passive role of the college student as copier of lecture notes (later to be reproduced verbatim on a test paper), and consideration of the community as "contaminator" of pure knowledge--and these conditions were almost universal as of twenty to twenty-five years ago. Shall we apply cultural revolution to changes in governance and support of public schools, to the financial crises of private and parochial schools, to the low attendance rates at public schools and to teachers' strikes?

Another dimension of the revolution must be recognized in the technological field. Its ramifications in our culture are far reaching when we consider genetic engineering, the "breath-taking" advances in transportation, the greater accessibility of more people to the comforts of life, and the increasing numbers of children of blue collar workers who are graduating from institutions of higher education.

If it is understatement to say that we cannot keep up with advances in medical science such as organ transplants, how much more shocking are the accomplishments of genetic engineers. Genetic engineering is now experimenting with test tube fertilization; already in 1950 Doctor Landrum Shettles of Columbia

achieved fertilization outside the uterus and maintained the embryo's life for six days. (See Saturday Review, April 8, 1972, p. 24) "Another possibility of genetic engineering...is the creation of what are called clones--carbon copies of a human being already in existence, resulting from a process much more revolutionary than the merging of sperm and egg in a test tube." (Saturday Review, April 8, 1972, p. 24) The moral issues raised by these advances are matters of practical concern to all.

Progress in transportation is startling when we consider its dimensions. Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock (p. 26) describes the change as follows:

> It was probably not until the 1880's that man with the help of a more advanced steam locomotive, managed to reach a speed of one hundred mph....It took only fifty-eight years, however, to quadruple the limit, so that by 1938 airborne man was cracking the 400 mph line. It took a mere twenty-year flick of time to double the limit again. And by the 1960's rocket planes approached speeds of 4000 mph, and men in space capsules were circling the earth at 18,000 mph. Plotted on a graph, the line representing progress in the past generation would leap vertically off the paper.

Greater accessibility of the sons and daughters of blue collar workers has added another dimension to the cultural revolution in America. Peter Burger's article on the "Blueing of America" would indicate that "...far from 'greening' America, the alleged cultural revolution will serve to strengthen the vitality of the technological society against which it is directed and will further the interests of precisely those social strata that are least touched by its currently celebrated transformations of consciousness....the positions disdained by the upper-middle class individuals will have to be filled by someone else. Who is most likely to benefit from this sociological windfall? It will be the newly college-educated children of the lower-middle and working classes." (Intellectual Digest, September, 1971, pp. 25 and 27)

Probably one of the most obvious revolutions taking place over a period of time in the United States is that involving microcultures--the movement of minority groups in the country to establish themselves as citizens with equal opportunities. We read of black power, red power, brown power, Italian power, Irish power, Polish power, and (shall I add?) woman power, "gay power" and kid power. We shall conclude this sampling of observations of cultural changes by mentioning the apparent effort of many organized religious groups toward a spirit of ecumenism, and for respect for the individual despite his differences in religious conviction. Among the lesser phenomena are the "Jesus movement", Krishna-consciousness, Zen, Yoga, and trancendental meditation.

While cross-national studies of the cultural revolution are important I believe that intranational studies should take precedence in the next few years. Masters of the art of cross-national studies could then spend more time sharing their expertise and in guiding the efforts of students in making cross-cultural studies in the United States. The resulting greater awareness of our cultural patterns should in the long run result in cross-national studies which reflect greater knowledge and more valid data. Three reasons for delay suggest themselves: 1. Our students need more adequate knowledge of our own culture before making comparisons. 2. We have only begun to be familiar with multicultural pluralism in the United States. 3. It seems highly improbable that an American student who has never ventured outside the majority culture in his home state can ever adequately understand another culture even farther removed from his own.

For too long many college and university students have attempted to study the cultural aspects, i.e. history, economy, sociology, and educational systems of foreign countries, without any but the smallest comprehension of the same cultural aspects in their native country. Witness from college brochures the invitation to thousands of students to go yearly to all parts of the world for "cultural" study who are not required to give evidence of their eligibility by knowledge of even the elements of sociology. The experience of study in a foreign country has added an element of prestige to his records but his impressions and knowledge may in many instances be little more than those of a tourist who has spent an equal amount of time in the same country. We are warned by some scholars of comparative education that comparisons between countries are likely to be weak unless the student has lived in the foreign country at least three years; what would they say of a few weeks and that with little preparation? George Bereday advocates a working knowledge of the language of a foreign country before effective comparisons can be made. (See Comparative Method in Education, p. 141) Bereday's words are impressive, "It is a mockery of the fundamental canons of scholarship for non-Russian speaking researchers to visit Soviet classrooms . . . and then later pass themselves as experts on Soviet teaching methods. . . . There is a difference between simply avoiding misunderstandings and having a deep, thorough feeling for the vibrant life of a foreign people. Students of foreign cultures must appreciate that languages are the key to this sensitivity." We really need to concentrate on better preparation of students who attempt cross-national studies of cultural revolution. Could we not advocate a minimum of courses in anthropology, economics, history, geography, and sociology of the United States so that our students better understand their own culture. Hopefully, by careful study of our own subcultures, using comparative methods, we will be better equipped to make cross-national comparisons. It is conceivable that critics of cross-national studies could ask if we are trying to escape our responsibilities to the cultural revolution at home for fear of deep involvement by hustling off to other countries where we can more easily avoid this involvement.

We need beyond the broad knowledge of the components of culture, a preparation which would include a study of the processes used in differentiating between a cultural revolution and a fad or a mere movement. Witness the number of university professors, journalists and writers who saw the dramatic behavior of the sixtes such as destruction of university property, class disruptions, anti-intellectual demands, sit-ins, use of hard drugs, and communal living (to name but a few)as the beginning of a great new cultural era. But as we see the movement dying we can recognize as Andrew Greeley writes:

> ...it preached relevance and commitment and yet when the going was tough, it abandoned politics. It preached high moral standards and yet decided that stealing was all right when it was called 'ripping off', that violence was all right because other people practiced it, that promiscuity was all right because bourgeois marriage was dull, that freedom meant the right to disrupt other men's freedom of speech, that oppression was justified in the name of liberty and that those who disagreed with the Movement's form of dissent were not to be permitted their own dissent. It decreed that drugs were all right and indeed virtuous, because other Americans drank alcohol and swallowed aspirin. It preached love but despised hard-hats. It preached peace but revelled in violence. (Greeley, Change, April, 1972, p. 43)

Too many college personnel turned "swinger' because they were not able to judge the genuineness of revolution. We need to develop a sensitivity for what is real cultural revolution in our country before we extend ourselves too far abroad in which case we are far more likely to misinterpret cultural revolution than in our own nation.

Concentration for a few more years on multicultural education in the United States may prove to be just enough to secure our progress in this area. Much progress has been made; much is yet to be accomplished. Since we have a hundred fifty years at least of operating on the thesis that differences among microcultures are a cause for fear, a positive program might be inaugurated in Comparative Education. Multicultural education would have to teach that differences are not merely tolerated but desirable because democracy as a political system is based on cultural pluralism. Education for cultural pluralism in the United States would purport to bring about healthy interaction among the groups which constitute our national citizenry. Why could not educators in comparative studies start with laboratory experiences in our own country--in Appalachia, in black, brown, or red ghetto areas? Could we not take study-tours to rural depressed areas or urban neighborhoods in need of development and live there for a summer or a semester? In areas of this sort, students could concentrate on cultural practices, values, hopes and aspirations of the microcultures involved. The techniques and methodologies of Comparative Education are well-suited and indeed valuable for such studies.

That the work of coping properly with the revolution which involves multicultural education in the United States is overwhelming needs little justification; that Comparative Education courses and research have the potential to prepare our students to meet the challenge is quite obvious when we consider the equipment they now use. We have access to the tools of scientific investigation that the disciplines of economics, statistics, sociology, political science, and geography can offer. Area studies have been part and parcel of our methodology. Unbiased and objective descriptions, characteristic of the literature of our specialists in Comparative Education can do much to expose in our culture the myths which breed fear and intolerance of others. Awareness of the nature of the differences in others is the first step in caring and healing. Analysis and interpretation of cultural patterns within the framework of a whole culture form part of the very content of Comparative Education as a discipline. Beyond these processes, Nicholas Hans even advocated that "Comparative Education quite resolutely looks into the future with a firm intent of reform. . . ." (Noah and Eckstein, Toward a Science of Comparative Education, p. 53) Our concentrated efforts at home for a short time need not preclude our remaining international in viewpoint, nor even in activity.

If the "ugly American" has any message for us, it might be that we take great precautions to insure that our students who go abroad for cross-national studies be eminently well-prepared in background and techniques. One possible way to facilitate this preparation is by working principally at home for the next few years. It appears that we would have much to gain and little to lose. We could emerge after these few years with students of Comparative who are sensitized to the inuendos of cultural change because they have gained deeper insights into the history, the background, the cultural milieu and the life styles of the cultural minorities of the United States. They will have facility with the methods of the social scientists because they have been using them. Our specialists in Comparative Education could possibly gain a renewed interest in and sharpened awareness of the nature of cultural change and revolution because they have been guiding others in the process. We could gain additional prestige in the world of scholars and observers if we were to concentrate on understanding our own cultures in the process of helping to fashion a nation

where cultural pluralism is considered an asset rather than a liability.
We don't need less at home of Comparative Education's contributions; we need more.

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